CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Vieux Carré Commission

Guidelines for Building Types & Architectural Styles

BUILDING TYPES & ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The Vieux Carré is comprised of a unique mix of architectural types and styles representative of the French Quarter's 300-year development. The buildings reflect the city's diverse history including French and Spanish rule, Caribbean/West Indies influence and varied uses such as shipping, commerce, banking and tourism, all of which provide a mix of materials and cultures that impart the district's unique character. In the Vieux Carré today, many of the buildings were constructed in the early-19th century with the earliest dating from the 18th century.

Just as the French Quarter is distinctive and diverse, so is the terminology that describes its architectural types, styles and details. There are numerous books documenting the historical and architectural development of the district. These *Guidelines* are intended to provide a brief overview to recognize and describe the most prevalent historic building types and architectural styles in the Vieux Carré.

SECTION INDEX

- Building Types & Architectural Styles; Changes Over Time – 02-2
- Building Types – 02-3
  - Creole Cottage – 02-3
  - Townhouse – 02-4
  - Center-Hall – 02-6
  - Outbuilding – 02-7
  - Shotgun – 02-8
- Architectural Styles – 02-10
  - Creole – 02-10
  - Greek Revival – 02-11
  - Italianate – 02-12
  - Eastlake – 02-13
  - Colonial Revival/Neoclassical Revival – 02-14
  - Arts and Crafts – 02-15
- High-Style Versus Individual Style; Alterations to Building Types & Styles – 02-16

All applicants must obtain a Vieux Carré Commission (VCC) permit as well as all other necessary City permits prior to proceeding with any work. Reviewing and becoming familiar with these *Guidelines* during the early stages of a project can assist in moving a project quickly through the permit approval process, saving an applicant both time and money. Staff review of all details is required to ensure proposed work is appropriate to a specific property.

Guidelines addressing additional historic property topics are available at the VCC office and on its website at www.nola.gov/vcc. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires VCC review, or to obtain a property rating of significance or a permit application, contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420.

The first step in using these *Guidelines* is to understand a property's color rating. The rating corresponds to the historical and/or architectural significance and then determines what type of change will be permitted and the review process required for each property under the jurisdiction of the VCC.

Review boxes provided throughout the *Guidelines* indicate the lowest level of review required for the specified work. Staff can forward any application to the Architectural Committee (AC) and/or the Commission for further consideration.

BUILDING TYPES & ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Distinguishing a building type from an architectural style can be confusing to someone unfamiliar with the terminology. To simplify, a building's type is the basic form and massing of the building, whereas its architectural style describes the detailing applied to the form.

Type addresses the overall size, shape and proportions of a building and the configuration of its rooms. Style refers to the decorative elements applied to a specific form, such as brackets or type of window or door. When a building type like a shotgun is combined with elements of an architectural style, such as Greek Revival, the final product is a Greek Revival shotgun, which contains the bones of one and the styling of the other.

It is important to keep in mind that some building types are closely associated with specific styles, such as a bungalow and Arts and Crafts. By contrast, some combinations almost never happen, for example a Creole cottage with Eastlake detailing.

This Greek Revival cottage has a projecting porch with rectangular posts and a bracketed cornice with a decorative parapet.

SELECTION OF TYPES & STYLES FOR THIS SECTION

There are a wide variety of buildings in the Vieux Carré. The types and styles found on the following pages are those that occur most often. The descriptions of these types and styles will be useful to most property owners. As a result, some have been omitted. If a specific property does not seem to fit any of the types and/or styles described in these *Guidelines*, please consult the books and other resources on New Orleans architecture referenced on page 01-14 of the *Guidelines Introduction*, on the VCC website www.nola.gov/vcc, or contact the VCC Staff at (504) 658-1420 for assistance.

This is a rare example of residential Spanish architecture remaining in the Vieux Carré. Note the stacked barrel tile parapet.

CHANGES OVER TIME

Trends in building types and styles demonstrate changes in technology, a response to a historic event and/or fashion. Beyond reflecting shifting preferences, building types and architectural styles tell the story of the Vieux Carré's development and broader societal changes. Prior to the fires of 1788 and 1794, the majority of the French Quarter's building stock was constructed from wood cleared from the early settlement area. Following these fires, with the growing ability to manufacture bricks and the requirements of Spanish law, brick-between-posts (*briquete-entre-poteaux*) and masonry structures became more common. Toward the end of the 19th century with the inexpensive construction cost of a shotgun house, wood framed buildings were once again popular.

Three centuries of living and building are what have created the "distinctive character" of the Vieux Carré. The overall pattern of the streets, lots, buildings and landmarks was established in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, the general appearance of a street vista and the character of an individual building represent an accumulation of several periods and cultural influences.

Determining the original type and style of a building can be challenging. The ground floor of this example has many of the characteristics of a Creole cottage, while the second floor addition has features of an Italianate shotgun double.

BUILDING TYPES

All of the Creole cottages pictured have a side gable roof with dormers. The cottage in the foreground has a stucco finish, while brick-between-post construction is visible at the neighboring house.

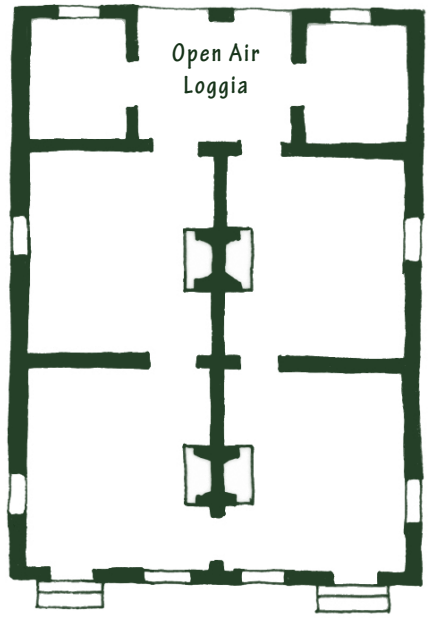
This four-bay Creole cottage has wood weatherboard siding, a side gable roof with an abat-vent, a central brick chimney with a "V" cap and two gabled, dormer windows.

CREOLE COTTAGE

The Creole cottage, constructed from the 1790s to 1870s, is the earliest remaining local housing type in the city of New Orleans. It is a vernacular type – designed and built by owners and builders to fit local needs – and heavily influenced by both French and Spanish construction methods and the local climate. The typical Creole cottage is 1- to 1-1/2- stories tall, 2-rooms wide and 2-rooms deep, often with two small storage rooms (*cabinets*), flanking a covered, open-air loggia. Creole cottages have a hipped or side gabled roof, frequently with tall, narrow, gabled dormer windows.

A typical Creole cottage façade is symmetrical with four openings, usually four sets of French doors or two sets of French doors and two double-hung or casement windows, all shuttered. The front façade is sheltered from the weather by an overhang (*abat-vent*) or roof overhang that directs rain away from the front façade. Earlier examples of Creole cottages are constructed of brick-between-posts or masonry, with smooth plaster or wood weatherboard sheathing. Later examples of Creole cottages are often of wood-frame construction with wood weatherboard siding.

While the Creole cottage is a vernacular type with minimal stylistic features, cottages built in different eras may exhibit subtle stylistic details of their period, such as arched or flat-topped windows, dentil moldings or "Greek Key" door surrounds. In some cases, Italianate details were added to update an older cottage.



First Floor Plan

Hipped Roof

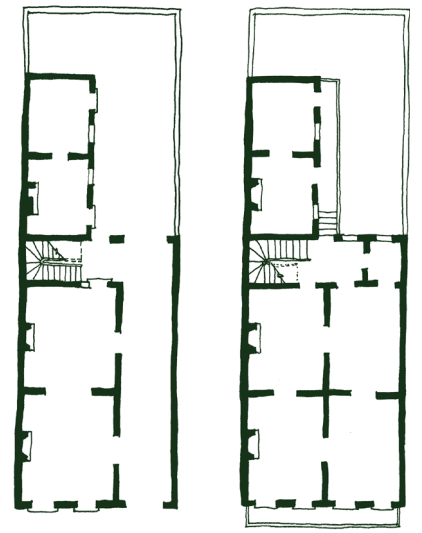
Gable Roof with Parapets & Abat-Vent

Gable Roof with Canted Overhang

Gable Roof with Overhang

This porte-cochere townhouse includes a carriageway in the right bay, providing access to the rear courtyard. The full-width balcony is accessed by four sets of French doors.

Many of the French Quarter's Greek Revival townhouses include granite piers topped by a granite lintel at the ground floor and a brick or stucco façade above.



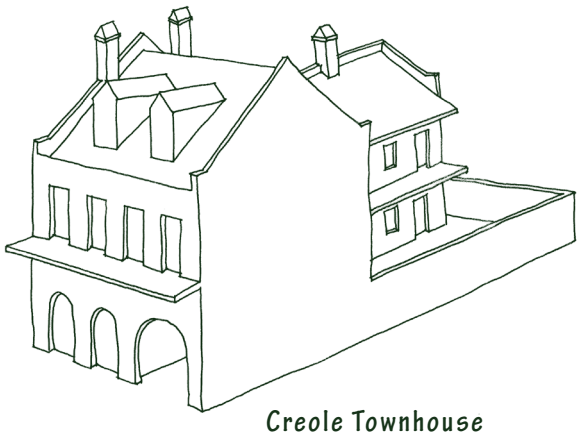
Creole 1st Floor Creole 2nd Floor

TOWNHOUSE

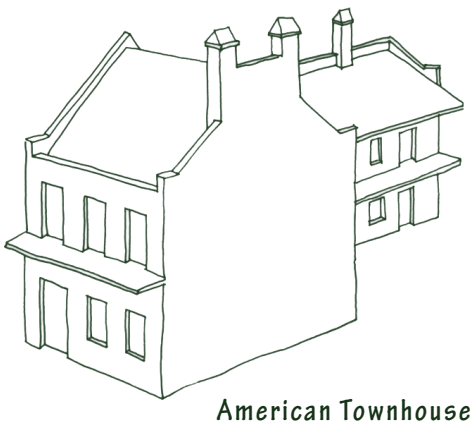
The townhouse building type, or some variation thereof, is common because its vertical massing and long, narrow footprint make efficient use of land. Common in the Vieux Carré from about the 1790s to 1890s, the townhouse building type is a 2- to 4-story, 1- to 2-room wide, 2-room deep masonry building with distinct vertical massing, a side gable or hipped roof and an orientation towards the street. The townhouse type first appeared in its Creole form in the late colonial period, but the basic type remained for the better part of a century as the American townhouse gained popularity.

In townhouses from different periods of construction, the shape, type and style of windows vary, and whether or not a projection, such as a balcony or gallery, is present.

The main block of a townhouse is typically rectangular in plan with a service building attached or semi-attached either to the rear at one side of the house or, alternatively, located along the rear edge of the property providing additional bedrooms or a *garçonnière,* and historically, a kitchen.



Creole Townhouse



American Townhouse

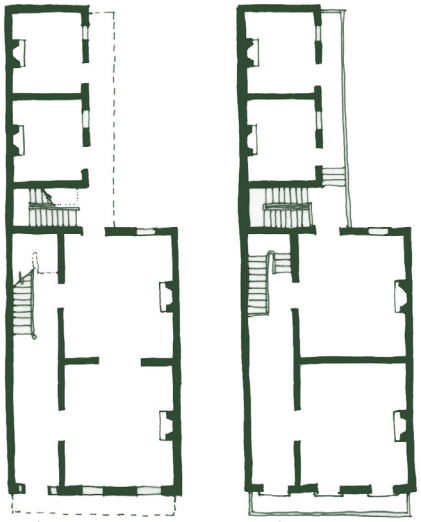
This double Greek Revival townhouse has a two-level, wood-framed gallery extending across the full width of the front façade, supported by rectangular wood posts, known as a double gallery.

This corner store townhouse includes ground floor commercial space accessed by a corner entry with a residence above. A gallery shelters the sidewalk and provides second floor level outdoor living space.

A Creole townhouse typically has arched openings at the ground floor level and a passageway or carriageway leading to a side and/or rear entranceway, rather than a front entrance door. There are no interior hallways, and a stair often links the main section of a building to a service building.

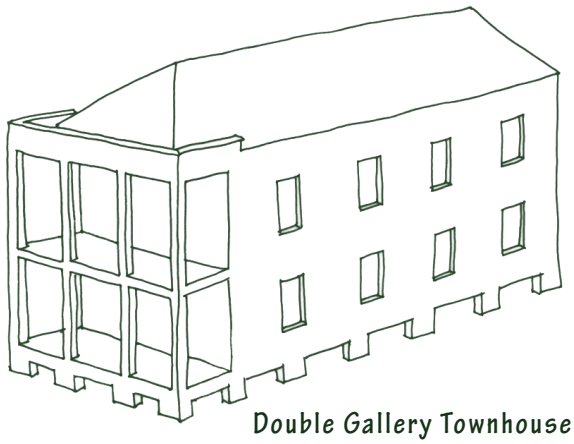
An American townhouse has a grand front entrance door leading to an interior hallway and stair. Although less common in the Vieux Carré, a townhouse with a gallery on each floor stretching the full width of the façade, is known as a double gallery.

The corner store townhouse variation is often present at a street intersection. In this type, a commercial space occupies the ground floor with residential space above. A large wraparound gallery covers a corner entrance point at the ground level, providing protection for store patrons below and possibly additional living space above.

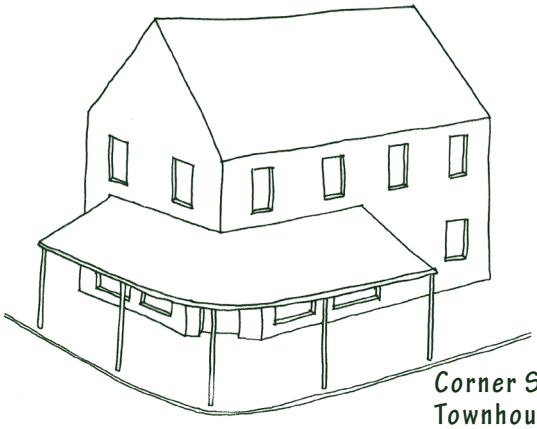


American 1st Floor

American 2nd Floor



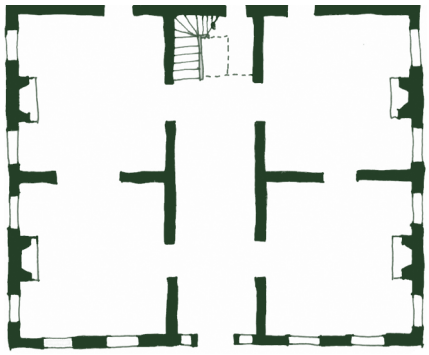
Double Gallery Townhouse



Corner Store Townhouse

The Beauregard-Keyes House was constructed in 1826. It includes a raised gallery and a central projecting Classical pediment.

The red brick used in the construction of the Hermann-Grima House, built in 1831, was imported from Philadelphia. The elaborate central entrance door is repeated at the second floor balcony.



Floor Plan

CENTER-HALL

Construction of center-hall houses began in New Orleans during the American transitional period of 1820-1835 as the French manner of building was replaced with more American building types, like Federal. The brick used in the construction of early examples was imported from Philadelphia or Baltimore. This hard, red brick did not necessitate the use of a protective stucco finish as required by softer, local brick.

The center-hall plan consists of 5-bays with a central, typically elaborate, entrance. It is rectangular in plan, with a wide, central hall, providing access to flanking rooms. In some cases, the central hall included a stair, while at others, the stair was located at the rear of the building.

The windows and secondary doors were a combination of multi-light French doors for gallery access and double-hung windows. Ground floor openings were often protected by heavy paneled shutters, while louvered shutters are found at upper floor openings. Chimneys are usually found along the side elevations.

A balcony is used for circulation in an outbuilding. This example includes a 2-level, covered balcony providing access to each of the upper level rooms.

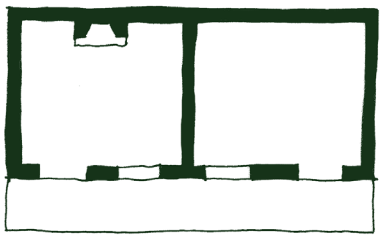
Some service buildings are partially hidden from view by a courtyard wall. In this case, the outbuilding is located along the rear property line of the principal building.

OUTBUILDING

An outbuilding, also referred to as a dependency, service wing/building and/or slave quarter, generally were constructed in the Vieux Carré from the early 1800s through the mid-19th century. Though 2-story structures are the most common, an outbuilding can be from 1- to 3-stories in height with a shed roof typically sloping toward the courtyard.

Prior to 1830, outbuildings usually were disconnected from the main house, located along the rear or side property line, and housed the kitchen, laundry, storage and living quarters on the upper floors. After 1830, outbuildings were attached perpendicularly to the rear of the main house, as an extension known as a service wing, forming the side wall of a rear courtyard. The characteristic floor plan is 1-room deep, 2- to 3-rooms wide with the primary upper floor access through a covered, wood balcony at the exterior of the building.

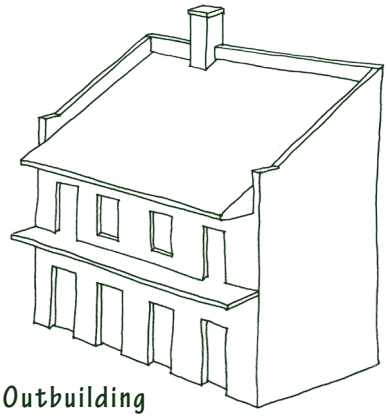
Though historically service buildings were utilitarian in nature, today outbuildings commonly function as residences or apartments independent of the main house.



Upper Level

Ground Floor

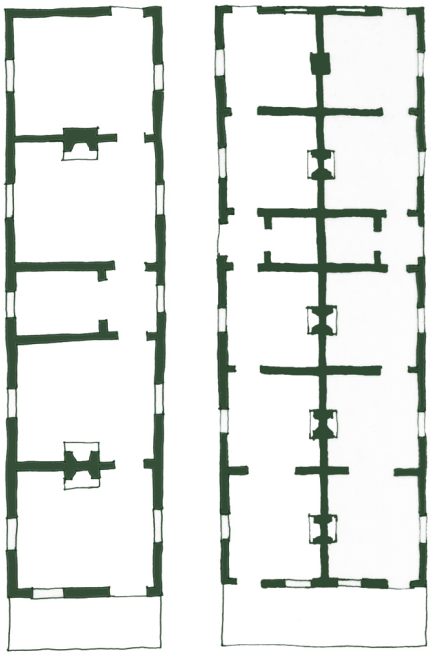
This "L"-shaped service wing frames two sides of the courtyard. A wrapping, covered balcony provides circulation that connects to the main house.



Outbuilding

A shotgun single is 2- or 3-bays wide with rooms extending toward the rear of the property, fitting well on a long, narrow lot.

A shotgun double is typically 4-bays wide and includes paired central windows or French doors flanked by entrance doors. They frequently are converted into a single residence, although their separate entrance stoops must be maintained.



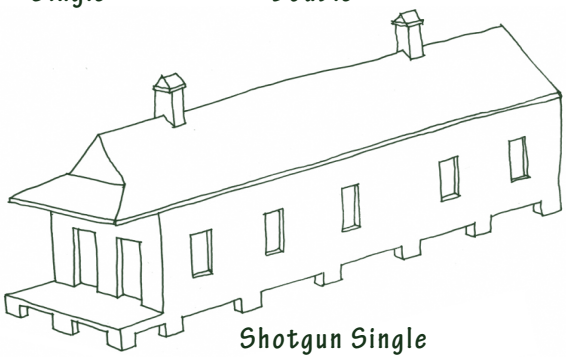
Shotgun Single

Shotgun Double

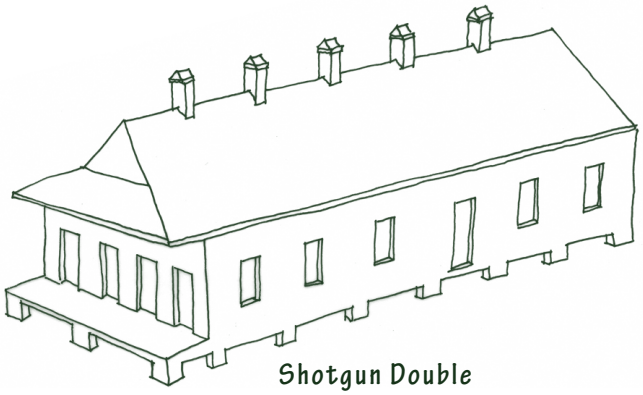
SHOTGUN

The earliest known examples of shotgun houses in New Orleans date at least to the 1830s. Shotgun houses resemble Caribbean house types prevalent in the 18th century. Some historians suggest they may have been imported to the city in the early 19th century. This highly efficient and comparatively inexpensive building type was popular among both the middle and working classes for over a century. Though shotguns are found throughout the South, it is probably the most prevalent and recognizable historic building type in New Orleans.

The most basic version is the shotgun single, a long, narrow structure 1-room wide and 3- to 5-rooms deep, with each room opening onto the next, and general alignment of door openings from the front to the rear of the house. The typical shotgun façade consists of shuttered doors and windows and may, or may not, feature a porch or deep overhang to offer protection from the weather. The shotgun house has a front gabled or hipped roof and chimneys found along the roof ridge.



Shotgun Single



Shotgun Double

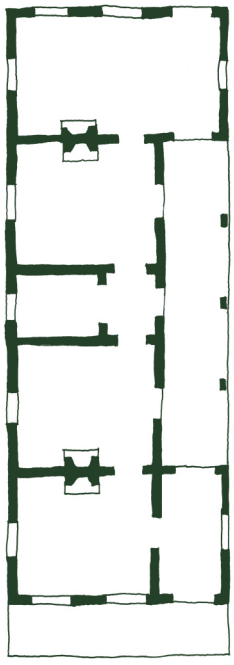
The second story addition, or camelback, has a hipped roof and is located to the rear of this shotgun double, minimizing its visibility from the public right-of-way.

This hybrid, 3-bay, camelback, side gallery shotgun has a 1-room deep side hall and an exterior side gallery that serves as a corridor and provides private access to rear rooms.

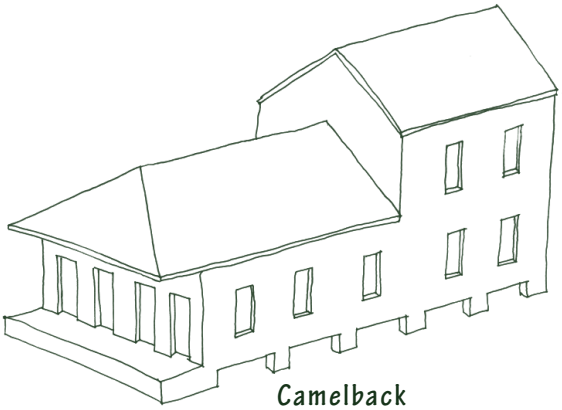
The shotgun double is essentially a twinned single, a 2-unit residence with a symmetrical plan and a façade of two doors and windows, each unit 1-room wide and 3-to 5-rooms deep with no interior hallway. A shotgun double has a front roof overhang providing shelter from the elements and may, or may not, have a front porch.

In addition to shotgun singles and doubles, there are camelbacks, those with a partial second floor, and shotguns with a sidehall or a side gallery. The passage in a side hall is a conventional hallway, while in the side gallery it is a narrow covered exterior gallery. A hybrid of these two types can be found where the front door opens onto a side hall 1-room deep, and then a second door opens onto an exterior side gallery.

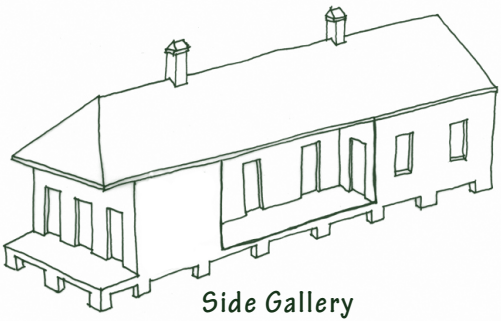
Shotguns can be found with façade decorations, windows, doors and front porch designs reflecting most architectural styles popular in New Orleans from 1830 to 1950.



Side Gallery



Camelback



Side Gallery

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

This 2-bay, Creole cottage has a hipped slate roof with a projecting abat-vent. The French door is topped by a transom, and the solid shutters with strap hinges are typical of the Creole style.

This 4-bay, Creole cottage has a terra cotta, side gable roof with parapets and a projecting abat-vent. The building includes a central brick chimney with terra cotta caps.

CREOLE

The Creole style, while often thought of as "French Colonial", is in fact an architectural style developed in New Orleans and prevalent from the late-18th century, during the Spanish Colonial Period, to the 1840s. It represents a pragmatic melding of the French, Spanish and West Indies architectural influences with the demands of the hot, humid climate of New Orleans. Over time, as the aesthetics of American architecture were accepted within the Creole population, this simplistic style died out in favor of what was then considered to be more fashionable, decorative elements.

Creole style hallmarks include brick, stucco or weatherboard exterior walls; arched, ground floor openings; large double-hung or casement windows and French doors; shutters attached with strap hinges on all windows and doors; absence of a dominant front entrance and no interior hallway. In 2-story Creole townhouses or mixed-use buildings, fanlights above ground floor windows often open to provide ventilation and can provide illumination to an *entresol* or mezzanine. An unroofed second floor gallery with an iron railing often replaced the balcony at townhouses after 1850.

It is unusual to find buildings where the Creole style is liberally mixed with another architectural style. Frequently, one might find a Creole style building that has been modified by placing Italianate brackets under a gallery or a roof overhang in a manner similar to that at a shotgun residence.

The Pontalba buildings, a National Historic Landmark, are mixed use, Greek Revival row houses that are the first to incorporate the use of cast iron galleries, which include the monogram of the developer, the Baroness de Pontalba.

Small, rectangular, third floor windows, known as frieze windows, are a common feature of a Greek Revival townhouse. Note the Greek Revival mouldings and dormer details.

GREEK REVIVAL

During the 18th and early-19th centuries, in both the newly formed United States and in Europe, the architecture and arts of the classical world were adopted as symbols of democracy. The Greek Revival style, popular between the 1820s and 1860s, is strongly associated with the Southern United States, although it is a style that appeared throughout the country.

Hallmark elements of the style, as it appears in the French Quarter, include wide, flat, plain, often "Greek key" design or pedimented trim around windows and doors (refer to photo at right) and full height porches with classical round columns or boxed piers. Roofs may be gabled or hipped, and porches may be topped with triangular, flat or stepped pediments and/or wide, plain entablatures, often with dentil molding. Building finishes are plain in style, and frequently the primary cladding is stucco or wood scored to look like stone blocks. Originally, stucco may have been painted in two colors to make them more closely resemble classical masonry. On masonry commercial buildings, granite piers are often found at the ground floor.

The Greek Revival style is associated with mansions, plantation houses, commercial and institutional buildings, such as Gallier Hall, but it was also popular on more modest residences, such as cottages, shotguns and townhouses.

This shotgun single features many Italiante details including the decorative brackets under the roof overhang, elaborate lintels above the segmental arched window and door transom, and weatherboard siding with decorative quoins.

The heavy, bracketed building cornice, decorative window lintels and arched masonry openings at the ground floor are typical of the Italianate style.

ITALIANATE

The Italianate style is a 19th century interpretation of the architectural motifs of Italian Renaissance and Northern Italian vernacular architecture. The style, popularized in England and the American East Coast beginning in the 1840s, took hold in New Orleans in the 1850s. Its use continued during the 1860s and 1870s, and some of its elements appeared in a mixture with other styles until at least 1900.

Common characteristics of the Italianate style include tall, double-hung, four-over-four, two-over-two or two-over-one windows with segmental arched heads and hood moldings; paired doors; symmetrical façades; and hipped roofs, frequently hidden behind a parapet. Italianate style buildings have horizontally protruding eaves visually supported by brackets, single or paired. Cladding on the primary façade is usually weatherboard or wood drop siding, with weatherboard on secondary façades. Corners are marked by molded or carved quoins, typically multiple small raised blocks that are mounted on a flat board.

Elements of the Italianate style can be found mixed with other, later styles, most strikingly in the large number of "bracketed" shotgun type houses. This popular hybrid style usually features oversized carved or turned wood brackets supporting a deep front roof overhang, Italianate window forms, ornate window and door surrounds, drop siding, carved quoins and "gingerbread" embellishment.

An alternating beaded pattern is found on the second floor gallery balustrade and lower level frieze. Note the flanking pierced, carved panels and brackets.

Gingerbread detailing and scrollwork are typical at Eastlake houses. This shotgun double has a decorative spindle frieze with jigsaw cut brackets and drops.

EASTLAKE

The Eastlake style came into vogue in New Orleans in the late 1870s and continued to be influential until the first decade of the 20th century. This late Victorian style was popular across the United States, spread through the use of commonly available architectural pattern books and was made possible by new, mechanized woodworking techniques that made highly ornate embellishment fairly inexpensive.

The most striking feature of the Eastlake style is the use of pierced, cut, turned and other patterned wooden trim, quoins, brackets, porch posts and rails in conjunction with wood shingle siding in a variety of shapes and patterns. High-style Eastlake buildings frequently exhibit a wrap-around porch, an irregular floor plan, a complex roof plan, bay windows, turrets or towers, patterned roofing shingles, decorative metal ridge caps and attic vents, and multi-light, specialty-shaped or stained glass windows.

Eastlake style buildings are not as prevalent in the Vieux Carré as in the rest of New Orleans. Most Eastlake buildings in the French Quarter are a shotgun double. The use of the style on shotguns ranges from modest turned wood brackets to porches, railings, front façades, windows and doors that are highly embellished with decorative woodwork.

The Neoclassical Revival style features of this building include the deep projecting cornice, the Corinthian double-height pilasters located between the windows and the rusticated base.

This building has elements of both the Colonial and Neoclassical Revival styles including the projecting, bracketed cornice, elaborate door surround and the twelve-over-two double-hung windows.

COLONIAL REVIVAL/NEOCLASSICAL REVIVAL

The Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival styles both owe their initial popularity to international expositions: the Colonial Revival to the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia and the Neoclassical to the 1893 Colombian Exposition in Chicago. Each represent a resurgence of interest in architectural styles associated with the symmetrical, classically-based architecture popular in the 18th century.

Colonial Revival is a nostalgic interpretation of Early American forms intermingled with classical designs that had persisted in popularity. These elements include classical pilasters, six-over-six double-hung windows, egg-and-dart and dentil moldings, porches supported by classical columns and doors flanked by sidelights and topped with fanlights. Neoclassical Revival buildings were more ornate than Colonial Revival buildings, and a reinterpretation of classical forms and elements, featuring fluted columns topped by complex capitals, and possibly a frieze and/or entablature embellished with garlands or patterned carvings and massive porticos.

Colonial and Neoclassical Revival stylistic motifs frequently can be found mixed with earlier Victorian styles and sometimes with later styles, like Arts and Crafts. Edwardian style refers to a design that became popular between 1890 and 1920 with primary distinguishing characteristics that are relatively simple in form and detail, but often embellished with elements of Colonial or Neoclassical Revival detailing.

This example of an Arts and Crafts shotgun double includes a bracketed cornice, decorative art glass gable end windows and tapered porch posts atop brick piers.

The horizontal massing of this stuccoed Arts and Crafts shotgun double is emphasized by the single span, arched opening at the porch without a central column.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Arts and Crafts style in New Orleans is a combination of influences from the California Craftsman style, the English Arts and Crafts style and the Prairie-style bungalows of the mid-west. Early examples of the style arrived in the city around 1900, but it was most popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Common design themes include unadorned structural building parts utilized as decorative elements, such as rafter tails, fascia boards and roof and porch beams; "natural" or "rustic" materials such as wood shingle siding and rusticated concrete block or stucco; and a deep porch with robust porch columns and overhanging eaves.

In addition to these design elements, Arts and Crafts residences frequently have heavy, horizontal massing; rectangular window bays; windows composed of many small patterned panes and/or leaded or colored glass windows; and, frequently, oversized windows under a porch overhang.

Arts and Crafts style typically is found on shotguns in the French Quarter. The style is expressed through doors and windows with square or rectangular panes or patterns, plain shingles or wood cladding and tapered wood porch columns, usually with a masonry base.

HIGH-STYLE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL STYLE

As owners may have modified their property to reflect personal tastes, it is common to see a historic building that includes more than one style. When any given building was designed, its owners worked with a builder or architect to create a structure that reflected their needs and tastes and the fashion of the day, not one that fulfilled a checklist titled "Creole Cottage" or "Greek Revival Townhouse". Some buildings were designed by an architect and others by the builder or owner, or built from a commercially available plan. Individuals may have preferred a pure, "high-style" building that included elements of a specific type and style, while others may have desired a building that included elements, components and/or details from numerous sources to meet their preferences.

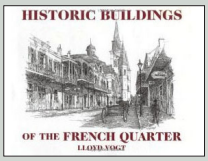
If a building seems to have all of the elements listed here under "Creole Cottage" but it has five openings on the front façade instead of two or four, it is most likely an unusual Creole Cottage and not some other type or style of building. If a building appears to have both Greek Revival and Italianate details, it is probably the case that one style was waning in popularity as another was becoming more fashionable. Just because one building is a combination of two or three styles, another has all the characteristics of one style and a third is a building with no style to speak of does not mean that one of them is any more or less important to the Historic District than the other. The French Quarter's unmistakable architectural character is attained through not only its diversity of building types and styles, but also each building's unique characteristics.

In recognition of the range of historical and architectural significance in the Vieux Carré, every property within the Historic District has been classified with a color rating. (Refer to the *Historic Property Rating/Review Process Levels, Guidelines Introduction*, page 01-5, for additional information.)

REFERENCES

Building type drawings found in this section are largely based on the work of Lloyd Vogt. For further information please consult:

Vogt, Lloyd. (2003) *New Orleans Houses: A House Watcher's Guide*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company.



Vogt, Lloyd. (2002) *Historic Buildings of the French Quarter*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company.

There are few examples in the French Quarter of the Queen Anne style, known for its asymmetric massing and distinctive roof lines.

ALTERATIONS TO BUILDING TYPES & STYLES

At a property where modification has been made over time, those changes, particularly those made before the mid-20th century, may have become significant character-defining features of a property's development. By contrast, more recent changes, particularly those with inappropriate materials or details, often compromise the building's historic integrity. When considering making any alteration to a historic property, identifying the building type and style is a critical first step in ensuring a successful result. Simply stated:

- The VCC encourages the removal of inappropriate, later changes as part of a façade restoration to make a building or property more historically accurate to a specific date, with thorough documentation
- The VCC discourages modern changes that compromise a building or property's historic type, style, significance or integrity

APPROPRIATE ALTERATIONS

If considering altering a building and need further information regarding whether the proposed change is appropriate for the building type or style, please contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420.

This material is funded by the Vieux Carré Commission Foundation on behalf of the Vieux Carré Commission.
www.nola.gov/vcc

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION FOUNDATION
New Orleans, LA. www.vccfoundation.org
Copyright © 2015. All rights reserved.
Prepared by:
Dominique M. Hawkins, AIA, LEED AP
Preservation Design Partnership, LLC
Philadelphia, PA. www.pdparchitects.com